

**GREEN BROOK FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting

DATE: June 2, 2021

MEETING CONVENED: 7:30PM

Chairman Murray opened the meeting and took role call along with leading the Pledge of Allegiance. He recited compliance with the Open Public Meeting Act.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Raymond Murray . GBFCC Chairman
Rich O'Connor - Engineer, GBFCC
Rob Zucker . Winning Strategies
Alek Peterson . USACE NY District
Tom Slowinski . NJDEP
Doug Greenfield . Middlesex County
Melonie Marano . Somerset County
Dale Leubner . Bound Brook
Stacy Narvesen . Dunellen
Jessica Dunne . Dunellen

Paul Woska - Middlesex
Harry Allen . North Plainfield
Theodore Bassman . Scotch Plains
Alice Tempel . South Plainfield
John Ferguson . South Plainfield
Daryl Eisenberg Knegten . Watchung
Pedro Estevez - Plainfield
Linda Brnicevic . Bound Brook Resident
Mark Kranz

I wanted to take a moment before getting into the meeting. On a very sad note, I got a call late today that John Sweeney's health is in decline. If we can keep John and the family in your thoughts and prayers, that would be appreciated. John has been a long-standing member of the Commission representing Middlesex Borough. He is a go-to guy. When the meetings were in the Middlesex Library, or for the annual Memorial Service, we never had to worry about whether the podium would be in place and the coffee and donuts would be there. His wife, Pat, giving us homemade goodies for our meetings for so many years. Please keep John and his family in your prayers for the next days and weeks.

MINUTES

The April minutes were not able to be viewed on the GBFCC website due to a technical problem. Approval of the April minutes will be done at the next meeting.

A copy of approved minutes is available on the GBFCC website.

CORRESPONDENCE

Not much correspondence over that past few months, just several emails back and forth between the Corps and the Commission regarding progress and the meetings to be set up with the local communities in the near future.

The GBFCC maintains a correspondence file that is available for inspection as may be necessary and upon request.

BILLS

Bills submitted are from the three normal vendors that we deal with: Grotto Engineering for Consulting Engineering services, Winning Strategies for Public Relations and lobbying efforts in Washington DC, and Tina Totten for the meeting notifications. A motion was made to approve payment of the bills. Motion carried.

NJ DEP . Tom Slowinski

We've been approached by Middlesex Borough. It is not really an Army Corps issue once the project is complete and it's turned over the DEP. Then we have the counties responsible for the operation, maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation. The Borough is looking at having their high school students or local artists to do murals on the flood walls. The Army Corps really doesn't have an objection to it. They do it in other cities such as St. Louis & New Orleans. I shared some of the pictures that Jerry Stoddard sent. I believe that flood wall is in New Orleans. I met with the counties, both Middlesex and Somerset, and they are of the opinion that we don't want to approve that, at least not right now. We tend to think it's going to lead to more gang-tag, graffiti-type thing. Another reason is that it's an expensive epoxy paint that's put on the concrete and has to be a certain temperature the humidity needs to be right. Then there's an anti-graffiti coating that goes on over that. It is designed so that when public works goes out there with a high-pressure washer, they can clean it up that way. Right now, we are saying as far as our non-federal sponsor and our two partners in the non-federal sponsorship, Somerset County & Middlesex County, that we don't want to entertain that idea right now.

My second point is, and Paul Woska I got to get with you, and we need to nudge to Middlesex County. The Army Corps is getting ready to turn Segment C-2 over which includes Cap Lane and South Lincoln Avenue. There are areas that the Borough used to cut. Paul, I want to get with you and maybe we'll go meet with the public works director over in Middlesex Borough, and we can decide what the County will be responsible for and what the Borough is going to continue to do.

Mr. Paul Woska: OK Tom, we can do that. No problem at all.

Mr. Slowinski & Mr. Woska both offered prayers for Mr. Sweeney.

Mr. Doug Greenfield: I'm not sure who you spoke to at Middlesex County about the murals? It certainly wasn't me. I'm happy to have a discussion offline about it. This is Doug Greenfield, I'm the planning director for Middlesex County.

Mr. Ray Murray: I can share Doug's email with you, Tom. And there was one final, concern that Tom didn't mention and that is the construction of the walls themselves. It is a fluted panel, that might not be super conducive to certain types of murals. It'd be very difficult, for example, to draw a face on a fluted panel like that, that it's going to not from one angle another be quite distorted. Unless it was more of an abstract, it might create a little bit of a challenge for the artist. Tom if you can reach out to Doug on the side and get Middlesex County's input on that and maybe share whatever conversations you had with whomever in Middlesex County. Just to make sure that everyone is on the same page with that.

Mr. Slowinski: Yes, that is a big point that the wall is fluted. It is not a flat surface. I'm sure it can still be painted but it does add a bit of interest. That's all I have.

Mr. Peterson: I just wanted to mention that the only other potential concern with putting murals on the floodwalls is spalling of the concrete. With moisture, other things get trapped behind it, and you get flaking. The paint would have to be right. So that was one other concern.

Mr. Slowinski: I sent you those pictures from Jerry Stoddard. It's too bad you can't screen share, Ray. The close up shows that spalling behind paint.

Mr. Murray: I will try to find the pictures and share it.

Mr. Slowinski: The project is looking good. Alek will touch on the culvert. Segment C-2 is getting ready for turnover. The grass has been patched and areas re-seeded where it was not taking. It is getting close to turn over. (Mr. Murray finds and posts photos of the wall in New Orleans.) The walls have a jazz influence and a theme, and it looks good. Then you see the write-ons, like somebody loves somebody in front of it and danger this and danger that. It does add to the aesthetic.

Mr. Woska: Tom, one of the issues too is that the walls are in people's neighborhoods, and they might not want that.

Mr. Slowinski: Right, like industrial parks or something like that I can understand. If you look at picture, that is what happens with a coating of paint, and I guess you could say a spalling, some cracks.

Mr. Greenfield: Generally speaking, when the murals are of a community, when the locals who live there create the mural, it generally isn't expected to turn to graffiti. That's why Philadelphia began the massive mural program that they took, it's really an anti-graffiti program. So that's why I'm happy to discuss it.

Mr. Slowinski: Yes, one of my workmates told me about the Philadelphia organization. Again, right now we're saying no, but we are open to see what's going on down the road. The initial take from the counties is the same thing, that they don't want to see it doctored up.

Mr. Greenfield: Okay, like I said, I'm happy to talk about it offline.

Mr. Slowinski: Absolutely Doug. Ray, are you able to show the other picture?

Mr. Murray shares second photo.

Mr. Murray: You can see in the photo in the lower left it is tagged and then all over the artwork in spots there is tagging.

Mr. Murray asked in there were any questions for the NJ DEP and there were none.

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS . Alek Peterson, Project Manager

Regarding funding, we're expecting to carry approximately \$30 million from this fiscal year into FY 22. If we receive \$40 million total (\$30 million federal; \$10 million non-fed) we could have \$70 million available to continue the project in FY22, depending on upon the DEP match. The project was in the President's budget for \$30 million for FY22 so that's good news.

In talking about all the individual contract segments, most of us are familiar with the bubble map and the sequencing for construction in Middlesex borough.

- *Segment C-2 Contract 1* . As we mentioned before that contract is scheduled to be completed soon. It's actually being physically completed this month, and hopefully by the end of the fiscal year, we would like to financially close it out. Demolition of 174 South Lincoln was deleted from that contract to allow completion and it's being added under Segment C-1. Both C-2 Contract 1 and C-1 are being done by the same construction contractor. Just as an FYI.
- *Segment C-1* – Next up is the Segment C-1, the base flood wall has been placed up to the hydraulic gap. Finishing work is ongoing now that the weather has warmed up. The contractor

should be able to finish sanding, staining and anti-graffiti coating the protected side of the wall. The unprotected side has already been stained. There'll be fence work for the Lee Drive backyard people and any final grading and seeding necessary and drains were placed through the base flood wall. The base gap and the optional 125-foot flood wall under C-1, both will be likely added as options under Segment C-2 and H which we're aiming for an award the coming FY22. That base gap and the optional flood wall and the Segment H levee under C-2 and H are hydraulically dependent upon opposite sides of the bank. The idea is to construct them in tandem.

- *Levee Option:* The levee option lies on 207 Pond Avenue for which we're working the condemnation package. Right now, it is at NAD. We are working to try to get that package to headquarters as soon as possible. Following headquarters, it would go to DOJ to be logged in, have a hearing with the judge, and then once we have the hearing hopefully, we would be allowed access to the property. If we are unable to build that levee under the current Segment C-1 contract we would complete it as an option under C-2 and H like the base gap, flood wall, and optional flood wall. The pump chamber has been awarded and is being constructed. Excavation for the pump chamber was completed. Rebar and concrete are ongoing.
- *Culvert Option of Segment C-1:* The big item is the culvert option of C-1 within the New Jersey Transit Raritan Valley line railroad embankment. Two weekends ago (May 21 - 23) that was successfully moved into place within the railroad embankment. The operation started late Friday evening. We had New Jersey Transit on site. They had two cranes on the track, one on each side to lift it. It was disconnected. They did that with both the North & South tracks. Following that, and the okay from transit, our contractor Carbro began excavation of the embankment. It was excavated down below where the culvert would be placed to form a suitable subbase. (A picture was put on screen) That picture is from the South side of the railroad embankment, right behind what would be bound Brook. Once they got down to the appropriate depth beneath the culvert, we had to reach rock, weathered shale, and that ranged from a few feet down to about 8 feet. We were able to stop and then fill. Dense grade aggregate (DGA) was brought in and every half foot to a foot, the fill was basically tamped down with steam rollers to compact it so that it could withstand the weight of the culvert and any embankment fill and trains going over it.

Once we had a suitable grade and base, Carbro had hired a subcontractor Mahmutt, which has outlets all over the world, and they had brought in two SPMTs. Self Propelled Mobile Transports. Each had about 128 wheels to withstand the weight of the culvert. Steel plates were laid down on the ground the whole length of the move, which was about 160 feet or so from where the culvert had been placed and where it was curing for 28 days. There were there were 264 wheels between the two machines. Each went into one barrel of the culvert. Each had a hydraulic press on top of it with pressure distribution plates. I would say that the move itself once all the once all the ground plates were down probably took about 20 to 30 minutes to move forward. Both Carbro and our district's public affairs office had drones, cameras and GoPros out there. We did time lapse photography & video photography. That's being processed. The move was successful with the SPMTS moving the culvert into place it within the embankment. And at that point, the DGA had already been compressed beneath and the culvert was being moved into place. Once the culvert was in place within the embankment, we filled in the sides and top with I9 (another bedding material) and then following that, transit came in put the tracks back in place, reattach them, inspected everything and then gave the okay and we were open in time for the Monday morning commute. I believe the North track had a little bit of a delay opening but it didn't stop the railroad from operating for commuters Monday morning. (A picture was shown from Monday or Tuesday, from Middlesex side, of a commuter train going over the finished culvert.)

It was a big success. If it had failed, it would have been a major PR disaster, among other things. That's a big weight off! The culvert was quite heavy. It weighed about 850 tons. About

800 of that was concrete with another 50 tons of rebar and metal to support it. It was a big operation. In New York district history, nobody had recalled doing anything like this. (Some footage from a drone was shown.)

- *Segment C-2 & H* – The next contract we're looking to award is C-2 and H, originally that was going to be awarded for construction FY21 but we've moved it to next year in order to finish design and receive the permits. We have pretty much all the property for the base contract consisting of the two closure gates across South Lincoln and supporting floodwall monoliths. Segment A & B, there's one property left, we're negotiating right now with the owner, and we expect to receive that property without needing to go to condemnation. There are a few properties in the levee options west of South Lincoln for which title work has to be done. That will last until FY22 in acquiring those properties. Those would be options under the contract so there's flexibility in when we could award them. Perhaps by the time we award the base and the segment H levee option as well as closing the gaps in C-1, we might be at a point close to awarding all of C-2 and H and possibly having all the funds to do so depending on the match.
- *Segment C-3 & C-4* - Following that, the next contract would be C-3 and C-4 consisting of levee and floodwall by Pinebrook Apartments on Route 28. Our schedule calls for design being completed end of our FY22 (August of 2022). Probably due to funding, we would look to award that construction contract in FY23.
- *Segment B-4 & C-5* - Following that, would be Segment B-4 and C-5. We've started design on C-5, and we're approaching 35% completion. Our next step is to go to the land use regulation program within DEP and get some preliminary opinions on the alignment and what would be permissible. B-4 is in design with between 60% - 90% complete for design. Looking to award a contract to complete that design and that will be phased to finish with C-5 and we would like to award a construction contract at same time as the two are hydraulically dependent.
- *Segment C-6, C-7 & D* - Segments C-6, C-7 & D along the Green Brook. However, due to hydraulic modeling, and the need to avoid induced flooding or higher water surface elevation levels upstream, we're actually looking to switch construction at that point to System I-J-K within Dunellen and Green Brook Township. We're doing hydraulic modeling on that now. Our real estate office is beginning to look to gain rites of entry to do preliminary investigations in that area for environmental delineation, riparian zones, wetlands, utility surveys, etc. We've already been there getting flood marks; we'll also look to do borings for geotechnical and HDRW sampling.
- We're looking to have a public meeting with the folks in the System I-J-K area. I'm mostly looking for Dunellen and Green Brook Township to get the word out to them. I'm thinking probably sometime the end of this month or maybe early July. I don't know what's best probably takes a few weeks to get a notice out. So maybe early July I'm thinking might be best. As the timeline for our rites of entry for real estate, for the preliminary investigations, basically depends on holding the public meeting.
- And at some point, later, we would also like to hold a public meeting for C-6, C-7, and D as the folks in that area are expecting us to move in that area next, so we just want to let them know.

Mr. Murray: That's the big, and it's actually a very major, change that has occurred over the past few months with conversations have just started with this. It's good that we have two representatives from Dunellen on the line tonight. Just to give you a brief highlight of how this

usually rolls out: The Corps will compile a list of properties where they're going to need to do investigation, whether it be wetlands delineations, or soil sampling and things of that nature. They will compile that list and basically send an invitation out to all the people that are immediately impacted by this work and hold a public meeting for their benefit to explain what's going on. So, the meeting will basically explain that their initial work is going to be just to figure out exactly where the stream is, where the wetlands are located, so they can get a more finite plan soon. So that's usually round one - getting in to see where the wetlands and the stream are located. Following that, they would generally come back on only a much smaller list of properties, where they would want to do some sampling, to find out what the composition of the soil is, and things of that nature so they know exactly how they will need to design the flood wall in that particular area. Then once they have an actual design, there will be a third round of real estate activity. That third round is related to getting easements, either for access for construction, during the construction or permanent easements, or if there will be any acquisitions that they need to make to put the project in place. It's a three-step effort. Holding the public meeting is good so people are not relying on what they are hearing from their neighbor, and are hearing it from the Army Corps, with the DEP and the Commissioner as well. It gives them the comfort level of exactly what's going to occur.

When they get that piece of paper in the mail, it doesn't go into the garbage can. So much of the work that they need to do on the real estate side all starts with that initial right of entry. If people aren't sending those back in, and they are just waiting it out, or not really noticing it coming in the mail, it causes delays. In the past, we've had to have a second round of public meetings, to emphasize for those who weren't at the first meeting, and for those who were, to re-explain the process to them and ask for their assistance. And getting their neighbors to respond to the Corps. They can either send the paper back or eventually the Corps will come knocking door-to-door if they don't get all the real estate rights they need. The first step is having a public meeting to explain all of this. Many people might have no idea that they're anywhere near this project. If they've moved in and we haven't had a significant storm over that period of time since they moved in. So, it's an education piece and it's a meeting to set the course of how things will go. The Corps can get to the point that they know exactly what they're dealing with and can come up with a finite design, with which properties they'll need to have, if a real estate acquisition, or whether it be a temporary or permanent easement or an out in the out acquisition based on the topography and the features that will be located in around those properties. Did I miss anything Alek?

Mr. Peterson: They want to reassure people that when everybody gets the letter requesting the right of entry, they don't think this is something more than it is. We're not coming in right away to take property.

Mr. Murray: Yes, that is important. Again, that first step is just figuring out exactly where the stream is and not relying on 30- or 40-year-old aerial photography to determine what features are going to be needed and where they're going to be needed. The height and the extent of a flood wall or a levee or pump station, the volume that can handle, etc.

Ms. Jessica Dunne: Are you looking to do a combined public meeting for Dunellen and Green Brook or two separate meetings?

Mr. Murray: I think it would probably be beneficial to do it as a combined meeting. I spoke with Alek briefly on Friday, before the long weekend, and suggested that timing-wise, we could probably secure an auditorium in a school at either Dunellen or Green Brook with the Board of Education's help just give us enough room to get enough people in. On the heels of the spread of vaccination instead of the spread of COVID, we don't want to have a bunch of people sitting on each other's laps in the near future. To use a facility that has a couple of 100 seats in it so that people can feel comfortable in coming there and being able to spread out is better than being to close. That was the thought there.

Ms. Dunne: Okay, I'll send a note to Bill Robbins and then just have you work with him to schedule that meeting for us. I'd just give him a heads up that you'll be reaching out.

Mr. Murray: As soon as we can, I think Alek really needs to get a feel from real estate as the volume of properties that are going to evolve with this, and we can figure out the timing of getting those notifications out. And certainly, the summer can be a challenging time, because you don't necessarily have as many people around. You have people on vacation, and you have people that have summer homes. So, you might not get everyone in one shot, but certainly we'll try it. We'll do our best to get as many people there as we can. And if we have to follow up with a later meeting where maybe it's even like kind of an opt in for the second meeting or I was away and, and I want to get there I think the flyers should probably extend out to everybody that's in the area of concern, but it might give some people an opportunity if they were away, or just not available on that night to kind of schedule something a second meeting a little further out.

Mr. Peterson: Okay, Ray, thanks for going into more detail.

Mr. Murray: Sure. What else you got for us? I mean, that's a major, major shift and to be moving to I . J- K and leaving the tail end of C and D, which is basically the area at the back of Mountain View Park in Middlesex and along Greenbrook Road in the area of the Green Brook Regional Center, and putting those on the back burner. That's the reason for the other meeting that Alek brought up. Basically, to meet with the residents in that area who expect something sooner rather than later, based on us already doing all the investigative work and mediations and all in that area. Just so that they're not wondering whatever happened to moving forward and getting the project up in our backyards.

Mr. Peterson: Ray, we would love to have the appropriate team members at the meeting. We would have somebody from civil resources branch, a hydraulic engineer doing the modeling to basically explain the reason for the resequencing itself is to avoid inducing higher water surface elevation levels upstream. And then we would have real estate division there to explain that the real estate acquisition process, and rights-of-entry. Also, somebody from environmental analysis branch explaining we're looking for environmental delineation as part of the investigations.

Upper Basin

We prepared our validation and directors reports, submitted a reclama to our Division level and Headquarters, basically, making the case that the District would like to keep moving forward with construction in the Lower Basin and Stony Brook and that a GRR be initiated to evaluate flood risk management alternatives in the Upper Basin now that we know that the Upper Basin recommended elements are not feasible.

We did a visit yesterday with NJ Representative Tom Malinowski. He came out and toured the project. Col. Matthew Luzzatto, the New York District Commander, Joseph Seebode, our Deputy District engineer, as well as some of the folks from Construction Division and myself. We started in Bound Brook. We met at Segment T Billian-Legion Park and briefed the project there. We drove past the two closure gates at Eddie Street and Main Street, down the main area that was damaged by Floyd, and went to the pump station. He was able to picture the train track by seeing it along with the R2 flood wall and the level of the water during Tropical Storm Irene. From there we went directly to Middlesex Borough. We had him for two hours. We took them right to the C-1 culvert option site. He got to see the pump station and culvert being constructed. Regarding the culvert by the way, there's another segment that must be cast, but it's going to be cast in place, on the south side. It doesn't require track shutdown or movement. From there, we took him to the Upper Basin, specifically the Oakway Site, so he can picture how the Green Brook and Blue Brook come together. We talked about the whole history we have with the GRR, the Torricelli Amendment, the appropriations ban, the Validation Report, etc. to help him understand the point of view that the

Greenbrook is a system that was formulated as such. We'd like to continue with lower basin and include Stony Brook, and then hopefully initiate a GRR potentially and Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2023 to look at the Upper Basin again.

QUESTIONS for ARMY CORPS of ENGINEERS

Ms. Brnicevic, Bound Brook Resident: We have a situation in Bound Brook with dirt bikes and widening the brook. I'd like some feedback. I have some pictures of dirt bikes riding along the levees by the rock machines. (She shared screen with pictures). Pictures were taken by neighbor. Dirt bikes are riding along the levee and tearing up the base. Also, in the next picture, you can see on the top of the levee, where they are riding on the macadam, doing burnouts, leaving oil stains. My concern is that the levees are being ruined after spending so many millions of dollars on this project. As a concerned resident, what do you think can be done to prevent this & to deter this? I almost know where the bikes are coming from, but it is also a long history of dirt bikes riding down the river front. Looking for any help we can get from you all to stop this. Its not good for the levees and the area.

Mr. Murray: I appreciate you taking the time & having the photos available for us. I can work with Dale to see what we might be able to do locally. Perhaps have involvement with the police department. Regardless of what needs to be repaired, we need to future occurrences to the extent that we can. I will have a conversation with Dale and the Borough Administration to discuss what we can do. I will be sure to bring it up as a maintenance issue at the next project meeting.

Ms. Brnicevic: A man told me they ride from the railroad tracks and go along the wooded area, along the freight line, then go over the top of dyke, leaving stains and tearing up the grass as you can see in photos. They go all the way to the soccer field, so it is quite a distance that is being ripped up. I do know of some dirt bikes that belong to people living on Talmadge Ave - they repair the bikes right on the sidewalks. It is a code issue with Bound Brook but I would guess they are part of the group that is riding. Thank you for listening and looking at this as a serious issue.

Mr. Murray: It certainly is. Whether it is man-made, or a natural occurrence, anything that is going to affect the levees and their performance is of concern. We saw very early on that a small dip in the levee, or if there was a levee that was not constructed to the height that was intended, had a big consequence in the very beginning of the project in Billan Park to the point when we were doing storm repairs, we actually had to put a little bit more height on the levee in certain locations. We want to max out and be sure the project is operating as it should. We will get input from Somerset County, who maintains the levees in Bound Brook and see what they see as a need to do something immediate in terms of what type of repairs, etc.

Ms. Brnicevic: This was posted on our local crime watch site, so I wanted to bring to your attention. I have been involved with the flood committee for a long time and I truly appreciate all you have done. Thank you.

Mr. Dale Leubner: I'd get with our Police Department first thing in the morning and see what can be done and then cycle back. We'd get this squared away.

Mr. Ted Bassman: Just wanted to explain what is going on in our town (Scotch Plains). I have had a hard time talking to our mayor. For the last couple years, we haven't had a flooding issue, and there isn't really activity from the project around here. They were all tied up around the downtown with redevelopment. Now we have a new mayor & I emailed to introduce myself. We a long phone conversation to talk about the project. I then ran into him face to face, along with the Township Manager, and they want a meeting to hear more about project. The Township Manager also happens to Chairman of what used to be called Freeholders. (now known as

Commissioners). This leads to an interesting opening in terms of where we are going in terms of the Upper Basin. Mind you, Union County struck out with the Rahway River flood project and here they come once more with the Green Brook flood project empty handed. I don't know how that is going to sit. I don't know when the meeting will be, or where it will go, but just giving you a heads up.

Mr. Murray: If you would like to make it a bigger circle and involve the Corps, that is something we can arrange.

Mr. Bassman: I don't know where the town wants it to go. It may have bigger implications with the freeholders in there too.

Mr. Murray: With their support, we can get things done easier as well. To the extent that they gain an education on the entire project, and not just the part that will impact Scotch Plains, but that they get to see the big picture. I can't tell you how many people scratch their heads when I explain how the water that does not go directly into the Green Brook wraps around and comes back into the project via the Cedar Brook. That should make sense to the people of Scotch Plains and Plainfield and Fanwood . on the East end of this project. Giving that full education can be a great benefit because the more people we have rowing together to get this done as soon as possible, the better off we are.

Mr. Bassman: I grew up in Fanwood and now have been living in Scotch Plains for 40 years so I'm a local institution in my own rights. So, let's see where this goes.

Mr. Murray: Any way we can help to further that conversation, please let us know.

Mr. Peterson: Ted, from the meeting with Rep. Malinowski yesterday, he is aware of the Upper Basin and that we would like to initiate a GRR to examine flood risk management alternatives for there. He is a potential contact.

Mr. Bassman: He only has a very little sliver of Scotch Plains.

Mr. Murray: He very much has a great portion of the project within his Legislative District through. We met with him within the first 30 days of him taking office.

Mr. Rob Zucker: There is about to re-districting, although that is speculative only, hard to know what those lines will look like. More relevantly he is member of the TMI Committee which is involved with the rewrite of it no matter what. Knowing that it is in his backyard more than others, he would probably be more likely to be involved in the aspects of reauthorization related to this.

WINNING STRATEGIES (WSW) . Rob Zucker

We have been watching the budget process closely. Alek spoke to the \$30 million amount that was just included when it was released on Friday in the Civil Works Budget. That is a robust number. We had a lot of conversations back and forth with the Senate staff over the last several weeks pending the budget release because if it was not that number or a number that the Commission would be satisfied with. To ask for money over that it would be counted as an earmark, although earmarks have returned, it would have been difficult to go back into the House process which already had their deadlines and alleviates pressure on the Senators with this not being considered an earmark as they can still fulfill requests to get the budget funded at the requested level. Positive development. We are closely keeping an eye on this.

I heard from Representative Malinowski's staff yesterday. The site visit actually was subsequent and pursuant to a meeting the Colonel already had with the Congressman briefing him on prior Corps issues. I think it noteworthy to see that he was already following up with his own eye to see what he had been told. Not every member of Congress approaches things that way. To see it, is to understand it better. We love it when elected officials go out and see it for themselves both what has been accomplished and what needs to be done.

We continue to keep an eye on infrastructure discussions. There is sometimes a perception that this might be like the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) of 2008/2009. I don't think it is the same situation where we would find ourselves with dollars thrust upon us. Nonetheless, we know that infrastructure is being talked about as one of those areas that could get potential action. By and large, the Corps projects have not been talked about at least in terms of the larger civil works project. A lot has been focused on drinking water infrastructure, and wastewater infrastructure, not necessarily flood control on the blue prints I have seen. We are watching it closely, and if we find opportunities to accelerate this project, we would love to seize them.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTIES

Middlesex County – Doug Greenfield

I don't have anything to share, but it does strike me that some of the accomplishments, such as the culvert, may be opportunities for press. I'll touch base with our marketing folks to see if that is something they want to pursue.

Mr. Murray: I can forward you the link to the USACE page that highlights the work last weekend. It has still photos and video showing the movement of the 850-ton culvert being moved 146 feet & 10 inches into place. Alek mentioned there is another portion of it on the Piscataway side that is yet to be built, as well as the floor to be added. That work is on-going.

Mr. Peterson: I can reach out to our Public Affairs office to see if we can put you in contact with more photos or footage or time lapse photography.

Mr. Greenfield: Before anyone puts too much time into it, let me see if it is something the marketing folks want to run with.

Mr. Murray: Any press is good press. Even getting one of these photos published in a local print newspaper or an online paper can only help heighten awareness of the project. I can reach out to local print reporters. I will write a short two paragraph article about the project and where it is going. It will prime interest in the meetings that will be coming up later this summer regarding the access that is necessary in I-J-K segments. I'll run it by you Alek to be sure it is scripted factually correct, and we'll go for both online and print publications.

Mr. Greenfield: Certainly, something to share with our County Commissioners given the money the County is investing and accomplishing.

Somerset County – Melonie Marano

No report.

GBFCC ENGINEER . Rich O'Connor

No report.

Mr. Peterson: One last note. Regarding the report of dirt bikes on the crest of the levee. We designed the levee not for recreational activities. If I could get a copy of those pictures, I'd like to pass them along to the Construction Division, so they are in the know.

Ms. Brnicevic: I just emailed the photos to both you, Ray, and to Dale.

Mr. Murray: I'd forward to Alek. And we'd send to Bill Wise and the team at Somerset County also to be sure they don't see any significant signs of concern with maintenance to be addressed.

Ms. Brnicevic: Are the top of levees considered a "No Trespassing" zone? Can you walk on the top of the levee on the macadam?

Mr. Murray: In the Borough of Bound Brook, when the easements were attained, it was not anticipated that these would be a recreational feature. The easements did not call for public access. After bound brook was nearing completion, the idea was brought forward in terms of "to we think it's a good idea" and the second question was "are we opening ourselves up to liability". I believe that Somerset County was pushing the side of . because we don't have an access easement for recreational use of these levees, we want to put some signs up that say you are not permitted to do this. Ultimately, any enforcement is going to come down to the local police engaging. Generally speaking, it is not that they are going to damage by normal use. Someone walking on levee is not going to destroy the levee. They are built a lot stronger than that. They are meant to withstand flood waters, hurricanes and things of that nature. If someone is maliciously doing something on the other hand, that could be a factor. Simply being on the levee is not going to interfere with performance. Somerset County was insistent they wanted signage out there, I think for the most part to lessen any impacts that could occur should someone be injured while undertaking recreation on the levee.

Mr. Murray confirmed the email with photos was received.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:40 PM

Upcoming 2021 GBFCC meeting dates:

Saturday, August 7, 2021, 9:30 am at American Legion Pavilion· 707 Legion Place, Middlesex

Wednesday, October 6, 2021, 7:30 pm

Wednesday, December 1, 2021, 7:30 pm